

was reduced by 25 percent, China was increasing theirs by 83 percent. This was happening out in the real world. People are not aware of this.

This sort of thing tells me that the administration isn't serious about pushing back on China. And do you know what? It also tells China the same thing. So talk is cheap, but defending our country is not.

If we really want to send the right signal to Beijing—a signal that says you can't ever win against us—we need sustained investment in our defense.

We have seen what happens when we cut defense spending before. Look no further than the Obama administration's 25 percent cut over 5 years. If we had just increased defense spending with the rate of inflation over the past decade, we could have invested another \$400 billion in modernizing our military—money we wouldn't have to spend today. Instead, we are playing catchup with China, which added at least \$200 billion that we know of—we never know for sure with China—to its defense budget over the same time period. Chinese military modernization has been nothing short of astonishing. Their ability to move fast and increase production rates is leaving us back in the dust.

We have invested heavily in the advanced capabilities we know we need, like hypersonic weapons, biotechnology, and quantum computing.

We are already spreading our military too thin. Our servicemembers have been asked to do too much with too little for too long.

But we know how we can put our military on a better track. We have a blueprint—the 2018 National Defense Strategy. This strategy actually has been very effective. It was put together back in 2018 by six Democrats and six Republicans, and they all had expertise in the area, where it has not been questioned. So we actually have a document here that shows us what we can do.

If we had increased—the Chinese military modernization has been nothing short of astounding. Their ability to move fast and increase production rates is leaving us in the dust.

Here we have something that we can follow, and it has been successful so far. We have all agreed that this is what we should be doing, but we have not been doing it successfully. We know the strategy is right when it comes to priorities and the long-term nature of this competition. Secretary Austin and Secretary Hicks said as much in our committee hearings.

So why are they talking about adding more missions, including the Department's role in climate change and pandemic response and not countering China?

So we know what the strategy needs to be, and that tells us what the demands on our force look like. Those demands keep growing. Now we need to mesh the budget with the strategy. We know what it looks like, and that is at

least a 3- to 5-percent real growth above inflation.

Now, that is what was determined some time ago, in 2018, and that is what we really need to be doing, but we are not doing it. And yet we know what should be done.

So, you know, this is a new administration, and I am going to do all I can. I have already met with the President, with the administration. I know that they are concerned, but we are going to have to get down and actually get it done. It means, in real dollars, an increase of at least \$75 to \$125 billion each year. Now, that would be if we stuck with the 3- to 5-percent increase that is predicted as being necessary in this book. This kind of investment for 5 years in a row would completely close the difference between U.S. and Chinese defense spending.

And what does the investment get us? It allows us to keep our commitment to our servicemembers to not only take care of them and their families but also to give them the tools and training to do their jobs.

You know, often, we hear about the fact that we are spending too much on the military. We talk about that we spend more on the military than both China and Russia put together. But there is a reason for that. The most expensive line that we have in our military is taking care of the troops, their families. You know, in the communist countries, they don't have to do that. They give them the guns; they go out and kill people. They don't have to spend the money that we do. But we do it, and we do it right. But we need to continue to increase so we can get dug out of the hole that we have dug over decades of insufficient funding and overuse of the force. The bills have been piling up for years. This is a down payment to get the U.S. military healthy for decades of strategic competition.

Now, I am hesitant to even entertain this idea, but I think it is important to talk about it. I know that there are some out there who would like to see the President go even further and cut defense spending by 10 percent. This is wrong, and Congress has already flat rejected it on a bipartisan basis last year. In the Senate it was defeated by 77 to 23. Even in the Democrat-led House, it was defeated on a 3-to-1 margin.

Now, take it from the President's own Deputy Secretary of Defense, Kath Hicks, who wrote that a 10-percent cut would turn the United States into a regional power, increase nuclear proliferation, and weaken our allies. This is completely opposite of everything President Biden says he wants to do. It would preemptively surrender the 21st century to the Chinese Communist Party.

A strong defense budget is the first step. It underpins all of our efforts when it comes to diplomacy, the economy, and technology.

Is China going to slow its military investments any time soon? No, it is

not. In fact, we know their actual level of spending is a lot larger than it looks. Economics, yes, but the Chinese Communist Party also lies about its military budget—no surprise. We know that they lied about COVID-19, and they continue to lie about their human rights atrocities against the Uighurs.

So if we don't properly resource our military and put our right forces in the right place at the right time with the right staff, we are going to fall further behind.

So it is kind of early right now, and this is the time, though, that we need to be talking about it immediately to be preparing for the future.

The bipartisan 2018 NDS Commission report already said the U.S. military could very well lose the next state-on-state war it fights.

We need the Biden administration to lead here—to walk the walk and not just talk the talk when it comes to China. And if the Biden team won't lead, I will make sure that we use our role in Congress to send the message.

It is not just Beijing that needs to see that we are serious, but our allies and our partners need to see this as well.

The best signal we can send is a strong defense budget topline. This can't simply wait any longer. This is common sense, and this is something, I think, that we will, on a bipartisan basis, recognize that we need to do and prepare for immediately. That is what we intend to do, and that is what is expected of us at this time.

With that, I will yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. HICKENLOOPER assumed the Chair.)

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, following morning business, on Wednesday, March 24, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of Calendar No. 40, Rachel Levine, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Calendar No. 38, David Turk, to be Deputy Secretary of Energy en bloc; further, that at 11:30 a.m., the Senate vote on cloture on Calendar Nos. 40 and 38, in that order; further, that if cloture is invoked on either of these nominations, all postcloture time be considered expired at 4:45 p.m. and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations in the order upon which cloture was invoked; further, that if either nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, pursuant to Public Law 96-388, as amended by Public Law 97-84, and Public Law 106-292, appoints the following Senators to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council for the 117th Congress: The Honorable BERNARD SANDERS of Vermont; The Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN of Maryland; and The Honorable JACKY ROSEN of Nevada.

The Chair announces, on behalf of the Majority Leader, pursuant to Public Law 101-509, the reappointment of the following individual to serve as a member of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress: Denise A. Hibay of New York.

The Chair announces, on behalf of the Majority Leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 100-458, sec. 114(b)(2)(c), the appointment of the following individual to serve a six-year term as a member of the Board of Trustees of the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Training and Development: The Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS of Delaware (term expiring 2026).

The Chair, on behalf of the Majority Leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 116-92, appoints the following individual to serve as a member of the Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioid Trafficking: Dewardric LeRon McNeal of Maryland vice The Honorable Kathleen H. Hicks, PhD, of Virginia.

The Chair announces, on behalf of the Majority Leader, pursuant to Public Law 70-770, the reappointment of the following individual to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission: The Honorable MARTIN HEINRICH of New Mexico (reappointment).

The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to Public Law 94-304, as amended by Public Law 99-7, appoints the following Senators as members of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) during the 117th Congress: The Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN of Maryland (and designate him Chairman) The Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island; The Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN of New Hampshire; The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL of Connecticut; and The Honorable TINA SMITH of Minnesota.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 123.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. 123) designating March 2021 as "National Women's History Month".

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. KING. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 123) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 18, 2021, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

RECOGNIZING THE HERITAGE, CULTURE, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF AMERICAN INDIAN, ALASKA NATIVE, AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 125.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 125) recognizing the heritage, culture, and contributions of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women in the United States.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. KING. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 125) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 18, 2021, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 937

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 937) to facilitate the expedited review of COVID-19 hate crimes, and for other purposes.

Mr. KING. I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2021

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 24; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the nominations, as provided under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. KING. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator SULLIVAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

NOMINATION OF MARTIN JOSEPH WALSH

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is not often I come down to the floor to say I have a lot in common with the Senate majority leader, Senator SCHUMER from New York. In fact, in my 6 years in the Senate, I don't think I have ever done that.

But after reading his remarks prior to the vote that we took yesterday on the Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh, I thought I would come down and make a few points on that nominee, that vote, and some issues I have in common with the majority leader and now-Secretary Walsh and maybe some issues I don't have so much in common with the majority leader but I think I do have with Secretary Walsh, which is why I voted for him.

First, as I mentioned, I, too, supported our now-Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh, for some of the reasons that Senator SCHUMER did. Let me explain. Secretary Walsh started in the Laborers' Union, Local 223, in Boston, age 21, following in his father's footsteps. Now, as many people know, the Laborers are the biggest building construction union in the country. They build things—pipelines, roads, oil wells, bridges. They have made America strong. I am a big fan of Laborers and leaders like Joey Merritt back home and Terry O'Sullivan, whom I am going to talk a little bit about.

Secretary Walsh followed his father's example and joined the Laborers in